



# The Reflector

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## TURNED OFF TO ORGANIZED RELIGION

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In an article on Fox news.com titled, “Young People Less Tied to Organized Religion, Poll Finds,” Lauren Green, Fox religion correspondent, cites a study by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion that shows that the people born after 1980 were less tied to organized religion than the previous generations. However, the poll showed that this does not mean that these young people are necessarily less religious than their parents and grandparents. It is just that they tend not to affiliate themselves with “organized religion.”

While the study showed that 25% of people between the ages of 18 and 30 said they were “unaffiliated,” 75% of those polled said they believed in heaven and hell and 90% said they believed in God. So the conclusion was that the under 30 generation was not necessarily less religious, but just chose not to be a part of organized religion.

Reading this report got me to wondering as to why these “religious” young people would have such an aversion to organized religion. I am neither a Solomon nor psychologist so I may not know many of the reasons for this phenomenon. However, I believe a couple of factors may come into play here.

1. Today’s young people tend to want benefits without public commitment to the “institutions” of society. Witness the decline in marriage and the increase “just living together” arrangements. They want the benefits of the marriage bed without commitment to the marriage institution. Similarly, they prefer a “personal faith” without the responsibilities and scrutiny that go with

membership in an organized group. It gives them the liberty to kind of “freelance” their religion without any responsibility of doing their share in an organized entity. Also, they can keep their religion private without any pressure to measure up to public commitments they would make by becoming affiliated with organized religion.

2. Today’s young people are smart. They can see the spiritually bankrupt condition of modern organized religion. The “mainstream” denominations today are more like social clubs than religious institutions. Besides their many social “ministries” along with the facilities and staffs to support them, even the worship services are heavily socially oriented, with very little spiritual value. Congregational singing is all but replaced with “praise teams” to entertain the ears of the “worshippers.” The sermon has more of a social message or a social commentary on current events rather than proclaiming the Gospel from the biblical text and making application to the spiritual needs of those present. Millions of dollars are raised and spent on the annexes to houses of worship to accommodate the social and entertainment desires of the congregation and community at large and to entice the less spiritually minded to the church. The “independent” mega churches are no better and even sometimes worse than the “mainstream” churches.

Why would an intelligent spiritually minded young person want to affiliate himself with such a mess? Why not just worship God the best he can privately without committing himself to support the agenda of modern

organized religion.

All of this could provide all of us who are striving to follow the New Testament order of things with an opportunity to spread the borders of the Lord's church. If we could just be more zealous to seek out those young people turned off to modern organized religion but still quite religious privately and introduce them to the simplicity of the New Testament church we might be successful. Show them that modern organized religion is nothing like the true religion of Christ. That by obeying the simple plan of salvation they can be saved from their sins and be added to the church (Acts 2:47) without

being a part of anything like modern organized religion. And that the only organized church that they will need to be affiliated with is a local congregation of Christians (Acts 9:26). This local congregation is simply an independently organized church with its bishops, deacons and saints (Philippians 1:1). Its public worship is simple and unadorned by pomp and ceremony. It's work/mission is spiritual.

It will take a diligent effort on the part of all and not just that of "the preacher" and/or elders. We believe it is worth a try.

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## DOES "EVERYTHING HAPPEN FOR A REASON"?

R. J. Evans

Based upon how often we hear the above expression "everything happens for a reason," you would think the answer would be a definite "yes." Just recently I was watching a professional football player on TV being interviewed, and while commenting on his teams loss, he remarked: "I know everything happens for a reason." And I can think of many other examples and situations in which this statement is used even by Christians.

If we were able to go back to the 1500s and ask John Calvin the above question, his answer would certainly be in the affirmative. In fact, this kind of thinking that is so common among us today is Calvinism through and through, and permeates almost every denomination. Calvins doctrine of Predestination, not only teaches that only certain ones have been chosen by God to be saved from eternity, but also teaches that every little insignificant incident in their lives has all been predetermined by God. Some go so far as applying this to finding a parking space in a public parking lot.

Do I believe that certain things happen in a way in which God has designed? Absolutely! He foreordained from eternity that salvation would be obtained through Christ, in His body, which is His church. In fact, Paul spoke of this to the Ephesians: "...having predestined us...as sons by Jesus Christ...in whom also we have

obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:5, 11; see also Acts 2:23; Eph. 3:10-11; 1 Pet. 1:20). We serve a sovereign God.

But that does not rule out the fact that some things happen which have no impact on Gods ultimate goals. Thus, while God may decide what needs to happen, contrary to Calvinistic doctrine, He also allows things to happen as they may. To prove this point that many things happen at random, we turn to the words of Solomon the inspired wise man: "I returned and saw under the sun that—The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all" (Eccl. 9:11). Again, some events randomly occur by simple "time and chance."

Of course, another factor would be the providence of God in answering our prayers. He may even allow bad things that happen in our lives to turn out for our own good. For instance, it was necessary for Paul to appeal to Caesar in order to save his own life. However, while a prisoner in Rome he was able to say, "But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12).

I am so thankful that, contrary to what John Calvin taught, we have the ability to choose our own eternal destiny. And of our own free will, we can become a member of God's family by obeying the gospel of Christ. In becoming a child of God, we then have the avenue to prayer where, He, through His providence, can intervene and work in our lives. But that is a far cry from the common usage of the expression: "Everything happens for a reason." If that were true of every little, small incident in our lives, then we could blame God and not take personal responsibility for our own actions.

So before you say, "everything happens for a reason," give it some serious thought and ask yourself if you are using that expression in a scriptural manner. In one sense there is a reason for everything that happens. For example, a person is in a car wreck. Is there a reason for it? Yes, perhaps the driver was driving on the wrong side of the road, drunk while driving, or a tire blew out, etc.. But on the other hand, "everything happens for a reason" with the idea that every detail in one's life has been predetermined by God is the doctrine of Calvinism. The scripture does not teach such. Furthermore, the phrase "everything happens for a reason" is not found in the Bible.

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## A FEW MAKE HISTORY

Robert Turner

Some brethren assume the continuity of a faithful, visible, functioning church, from the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection until now. It must be "assumed" — it can not be proven — nor do I believe either is essential. But on that assumption, there is a "necessary inference" that should shake us up a bit.

If there has always been a "faithful few" it is because there has always been a few who acted independently of the majority — who thought for themselves — who refused to go along with the elders or the preacher "for the sake of peace." History is filled with proof of continual change which constituted apostasy from the divinely ordained standard. Such changes (we do not refer to changes of no scriptural consequences) had to be

resisted — by people who knew the difference in essentials and non-essentials, and who refused to accept as a matter of faith or standard for fellowship anything for which there was no divine authority.

In every generation there had to be a few who endured the name "Anti" or its equivalent, and went about the business of maintaining a small (minority) scriptural church regardless of how this affected their secular business and social relations.

The key was, of course, independent Bible study, which directed dedication to Christ rather than to the "party" or popular opinion. The faithful few knew both who and what they believed (2 Tim. 1:12-14), and on this basis they both spoke and acted (2 Cor. 4:13). They had convictions — vital, personal, motivating convictions.

But the folk today who rest their hope upon party affiliation, and seem most anxious to assume the historic continuity of such a party; are often the least informed, and less likely to have strong convictions based upon independent Bible study.

Had you lived in the "dark ages," would you have been among the "faithful few"? We all like to think that we would have been; but the truth can be read in our present day record. Do we stand with the "faithful few" today, regardless of consequences?

## SENSE OF SHAME

L. A. Stauffer

In a recent interview an actress who recently did her first nude scene in a movie explained her discomfort the first time she disrobed on the set before the director, cameramen, and other members of the cast. She explained how reluctant she was, how awkward she felt — as though she at first felt a sense of shame. She then noted how much more comfortable she became and how much easier it was with each take and repeat of the scene as the director worked to get it just right.

This illustrates how in time, with continued practice, any person can become shameless and insensitive to shameful actions. It has happened in this country with fornicators, abortionists, homosexuals, lewd dancers, divorces for frivolous reasons, and nudity and filthy

speech on TV and in the movies. Our sense of shame as a nation is all but lost and we, as Israel of old, no longer know how to blush (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12).

But let's get back to the subject of nudity. Shame has been associated with nakedness since the sin of Adam and Eve, who hid themselves in embarrassment and tried to cover their bodies with fig-leaf aprons. Jesus, in the book of Revelation, joins shame to nakedness a couple of times (Revelation 3:18; 16:15). And in the case of Adam and Eve, God replaced their inadequate aprons with coats of skin which, according to Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies, were garments that generally had sleeves and came to the knees (p. 81). It is also interesting that God made undergarments for the priests that covered the thighs to hide the nakedness that could be seen under their outer garments when they climbed the high steps up to the altar (Exodus 28:40-42).

All of this should be put in the context of marriage—the honorable and pure relationship in which men and women may view one another's bodies and join themselves in a one-flesh relationship (Hebrews 13:4). Jesus made it clear that viewing the body of one to whom you are not married and lustful after it is impure and adulterous in heart and thought (Matthew 5:27,28). Men and women are, as a result, responsible to clothe themselves in a way that such illicit thinking is not provoked.

This begins with a sense of shame and sensitivity about exposing breasts, private parts, and thighs to someone other than your mate. This, we believe, is the meaning of nakedness in the Bible. Women need a sense of shame about wearing low-cut and short clothing which expose areas of their bodies that only their spouse has a right to look upon. And so it should be with the men.

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Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 6:15)

## QUIT DOING NOTHING

Robert F. Turner

The flamboyant evangelist, Dr. Sam Jones, was well known in some circles for his "Quittin' Meetings." During his revivals he gave people a special opportunity to confess their sins and repent. Many quit swearing, quit gossiping, quit drinking, quit smoking, etc. He asked one woman what she planned to quit, and she replied, "I ain't been doing nothing, and I am going to quit doing that!"

Assuming she was true to her word, that was a worthy change. Think what great works most churches could accomplish if about two-thirds of the members would "quit doing nothing."

Yes, I know. The illustration led to an exaggeration. Two-thirds of the members are not "doing nothing." Even those who sleep through the worship are absorbing sound waves, and that makes it easier on the speaker. I learned, long ago, not to expect every called-out person to be all that the Lord says they should be; but I hope and pray I will never give up trying to bring about this condition. When reality becomes cynicism we are done. Aren't you glad the Lord did not give up on you? The Lord was not blinded to the reality of a sinful world when he died for those sins. He must have known that many for whom He died would "do nothing" about it.

Some brethren "do nothing" because they have been conditioned to think the church does it all—an erroneous institutional concept of church. Some equate the Lord's work with public service, and think they have no talent for that. Some excuse themselves with the fear they may do something wrong. And some "tried once, but no one paid any attention to me." In all these, we are too much concerned with what people think of us, instead of acting in faith and with a view to pleasing the Lord.

Somehow we must reawaken the concept of individual and direct relationship of each saint to Christ. The "priesthood of believers" must be re-established in our thinking. I must know that regardless of what others do, or do not do; regardless of popularity or opposition, of affluence or famine; I must serve my Master in all good conscience (Rom. 14:4-12).